

**Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps**

**Iwo Jima Association of America Reunion Symposium Gala Dinner  
In Honor of Lieutenant General Snowden**

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GENERAL JAMES AMOS: First of all, welcome everybody. I had a whole list of every one of the dignitaries that I was going to talk about and now I don't have to. Warren, wherever you are -- there you are. Thank you. God bless you. I don't have to run through that whole list, but welcome everybody. When Bonnie and I came in tonight, we kind of got hooose-gowed, so there's a bunch of you that we didn't get to say hello to, and so I apologize. But I did get to see a couple of brothers back there, some of our wounded warriors and their families, so it's good to see them... probably the bulk of them I've had the privilege, over the last couple of years, of pinning the Purple Heart on while visiting them in the hospital...and it was interesting tonight because I hadn't seen a couple of them in a while. They're getting out and going to school, some of them are going to Charlotte, but they're moving on and getting on with the next part of their lives. So it's kind of a reunion. There's a brotherhood there.

Sitting at that table is Colonel Willy Buhl, who is the commanding officer of the Wounded Warrior Regiment. Willy gave up command of 5th Marines about a year ago, and I asked him if he would come command this regiment and the two battalions of our wounded Marines... Nobody is more qualified than the former CO of the 5th Marines, so Willy, thank you for being here -- and thanks for your leadership of all those great, young Marines. (Applause)

I got to tell you, I'm ecstatic to be here. I was with you last year at the luncheon, but I got that real strong message you sent me last year about halfway through the luncheon when you turned the fire alarm on (Laughter) right in the middle of my remarks, so I think I got the message that I must have been speaking too long or something, and we all had to evacuate the National Museum of the Marine Corps that day as I recall... and even though we all knew that it was a fake smoke alarm, we had to follow the instructions... all of us did, so we stood outside and visited for a while. But it's good to be here.

You know what? Two years ago in February, I spoke at the dinner that night, and I remember that Bonnie Haynes... and I remember Fred being there, and I just remember -- it was just that they really worked hard to be there that night, and I'll never forget it. Both you and your husband left because he was feeling puny and then we lost him sometime shortly thereafter. So it's great to see you here tonight, and thank you for carrying on what General Haynes has started here so faithfully.

We got a lot of good friends here. This has been a particularly interesting week in the Marine Corps and really all across our country with the hearings, the budget business and all that, and I'm not going to get into that. But I just wanted to give you the framework, a sense for how appreciative I am to be here among friendly people. (Laughter) I have spent about three hours testifying in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday and three-and-a-half hours on Wednesday in front the House Armed Services Committee on budgets and sequestration and where the hell we're going and what's all going to happen and all of that... so I've been looking forward to this (Laughter) more than you imagine.

We spent Christmas in Afghanistan this year. Either I have or the Assistant Commandant has every year... that's just what the Commandants have done throughout the history of our Corps, so it's nothing new. But we spent Christmas there this year with a small group of Marines that were traveling with me, and I did something I never thought I would do. After four years of pushing back on Bonnie Amos saying I really, really do need to go to Iraq or Afghanistan for Christmas, and I've given her every excuse in the book, and I even told her,

quite frankly, the Marines don't give a poop about you Bonnie. It's all about me. (Laughter) I said they're not going to care about you. It's just the Sergeant Major and me. When you get off the back of a V-22 or a 53 and they're going to see you and they're going to go 'what the hell is this?' (Laughter) Well, that lasted for about two or three years, and then and then this last fall I said it's illegal. You can't go. (Laughter) It's against the rules. Well, what rules are those? Show me where big guy. (Laughter)

And so I said I'll tell ya, I'll do one better. I'll get -- I have in my office -- at home, I have a full communications suite. I mean, I've got a video teleconference that I can talk around the world up to classified. And so I said I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll just get a hold of Jim Mattis, the Commander of Central Command, on the VTC right now. We'll watch this and we'll see what happens. So I beamed him up, and Jim Mattis' face comes up on the other side of the VTC, and I said hey, Jimbo, it's good to see you. What's happening down there? So we talked a little bit, and then I said hey ah, Jim, listen, Bonnie is here, and she kind of stuck her head around, just to him, and I said she wants to go to Afghanistan, and I thought I'd just cut this off and you can tell her right now that it's just against the rules, against Central Command general order whatever. And he says Bonnie, I think that's a terrific idea. (Laughter and Applause)

So I said okay, you know, General John Allen, the commander of all the forces in Afghanistan, so I beamed John up on the Tandberg -- I mean on the VTC, and I said hey, John, listen, Bonnie wants to come and spend Christmas in Afghanistan this year, and I know for a fact that would be inappropriate in a combat zone. Bonnie stuck her head in and leaned over my shoulder and she said hi John, and he said Bonnie I think that would be terrific idea. (Laughter) Anyway, I lost. We spent Christmas and Thanksgiving in Afghanistan. Ladies and gentlemen, the First Lady of the Marine Corps, a combat veteran of Christmas of 2012, Bonnie Amos. (Applause) We actually had -- to be honest with you, it turned out to be even more meaningful than I thought it was going to be. We knew it was going to be good, and Jim Mattis and John Allen flew down, and we served Christmas dinner there in the chow hall to about 4 or 500 Marines. They got pictures of us that says -- the caption -- says 'the three wise men and Mrs. Clause'. (Laughter)

I just got back on Monday, and we went back again just this past week and spent three or four days. We wanted to meet with the commanders before testimony. We wanted to get a sense -- even though every time we go we meet the commanders but mostly, it's with the young Marines. And we wanted to get a real sense for how things were going, and I just want to give you just a little bit of that tonight because we're all Americans, patriots, we've got Veterans from many, many wars in here. I'm going to talk about General Snowden here in a second, a Veteran of three wars and 37 years of being a Marine. So we've got an interest in what's going on in Afghanistan, and I'll tell you we've gone through seven infantry battalions on the ground in Afghanistan, seven of them, plus all the aviation, plus all the combat support and combat logistics and service support.

We've gone from that down to two battalions. We've gone from 20,000 Marines down to 7,000 Marines, and in -- you might say well, that's not good, and actually, I'm here to report to you that where we are, down in the southern part of Afghanistan, that it's really going quite well. Every one of these Marines here in the back have fought in Afghanistan, and many of them were wounded in Afghanistan. The Marines that are around this table wear the uniform of -- all of them have spent time in and out of Afghanistan. And I'm here to report tonight that in our

zone, in the Helmand Province, which years ago, four or five years ago, when we went in, it was in my estimation arguably the most dangerous spot of all of Afghanistan. Well over 70% of the world's heroin comes out of the Helmand river valley. It's grown there. The poppy is grown there, it's harvested, they scrape the sap off the poppy bulbs, and they process it, and they ship it out around the world. So it was the heart -- the Taliban were born right next door, over in Kandahar, that's the birthplace of the Taliban.

But now, when we were there, just this past Sunday and Monday, I'm here to tell you that things have settled down to the point where the battalion commander of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines down in the Garmser-Marjah area looked at me and he said General, he said the Afghan National Army, the army we've been training, the ones we've been responsible for, the ones that are the future of that country, are overmatching the enemy and overmatching the Taliban in every single instance. The Taliban and the enemy cannot do anything. They can't move, they can't come back because of the Afghan Nation Army... so I went up north up to Sangin where some of our Marines were wounded, and we fought pretty hard there over the last two years. At Sangin, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines Lieutenant Colonel Don Tomich was standing out there with his Marines. He said exactly the same thing.

So we came out of there and I've been preaching that to Congress since I've got back on Monday night -- that things in our zone are going well, and if we stay until the end of 2014, the campaign plan is going to work. The President announced -- I was at the State of the Union on Tuesday night and the President announced that 34,000 more US forces are coming out this year. I think we're going to be okay, and I tell you that you need to hear that from me. I think we're going to be okay. I think it's the right thing to do, and I think Afghanistan, when we finally leave in 2014, it's not leave when the mission is complete -- we'll have set the *greatest* conditions for the *greatest* possibility of success for that country... and that's all we can do. Much like Iraq, when the Marines pulled out of Iraq, out of the Anbar Province after slugging it out for about six or eight years, we pulled out under a victory pennant and we left it about as good as it could possibly be. Not *about* as good; *as* good as it could possibly be.

Ladies and gentlemen, switching gears here for just a second, I have the privilege to introduce and really talk a little bit about Lieutenant General Snowden. He's a 37-year Marine Veteran, as I said earlier, three wars, but let me take you back to where it kind of began for him, back in the 40s, when he was the company commander of Fox Company of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines. He fought on Saipan and Tinian -- by the way, just so that you know we're going back -- just to let you know -- General Snowden, like you said, the more things change, the more they stay the same... We're going back. We're building training bases and training ranges on Tinian right now. We've got an environment impact statement and all that kind of stuff that you got to do before you build a training range to make sure you've got all the horny toads and island tortoises all identified so you don't schwak them or run em over and all that. (Laughter) But we're going to training on Tinian.

Saipan lives just about 8 miles off -- in fact it's right on the approach corridor so we'll put some training ranges around Saipan, but we're going to Guam, so you spent a lot of time there. After Saipan and Tinian, then it was on to Iwo Jima as the commanding officer of Fox Company. After 27 days of fighting on Iwo Jima he was wounded and he was scheduled to be shipped out to Guam to get his body repaired and get back in the fight, but being the man of character and the leader he is, he said No. Then somewhere along the line and somehow he did

it. As only Marines have done for probably centuries... convincing their corpsman and their docs to get back to their men and indeed he did. He said the Marines on that island, the men of Fox Company are my family. He came back and he continued to lead them and he was wounded a second time. Some guys never figure it out.

But General Snowden, I'm glad you survived Iwo Jima. I'm glad you've been a patriot and a leader of this organization right from the very beginning. He represents what we -- two years ago in the Marine Corps birthday ball video -- and I think many of you saw we -- the title was the Indomitable Spirit of Marines. And that's really what twenty or so of those old veterans that stood out there tonight from Iwo Jima -- both and Army Air Force and Marines and Navy. It's that indomitable spirit. That spirit that says, you know, I'm going to be a part of the 27,000 forces that take that island. Three divisions -- I mean you know the story. February the 19th, 1945, you know it well, and I'm particularly pleased that not only our Veterans here had an understanding that the numbers are decreasing every year, but our families are here, the children and the grandchildren.

There are even friends here tonight that don't have anybody affiliated with Iwo Jima. I met a retired Colonel -- an Army ranger -- his father flew off Navy aircraft carriers bombing Iwo Jima in support of the Marines, and he's here, and he's part of this night. So there's an affinity and an affiliation that becomes almost spiritual, so I'm particularly pleased that you're all here tonight because you're all part of that indomitable spirit that took place and was demonstrated on that island. Well, I've got to think about some of the things that may have changed -- not may have changed, but actually did change since Captain Snowden was a youngster running around Tinian, Saipan and Iwo Jima. You think about that.

On Iwo Jima, Larry Snowden carried the M-1 Garand rifle. It weighed 11 pounds. It had an eight-round clip and a maximum effective range of 500 meters. His radio, the SCR-300 weighed about 38 pounds, so radio operator had that baby and humped it on his back right next to the company commander -- they were attached at the hip. You could communicate up to about 3 miles with that radio and there was no body armor. We didn't have all that stuff we wear today. We just had this tin hat that you put on top of that kind of carbon fiber thing in those days and that was all you wore back then. Sometimes you pour water in it, sometimes you bathe in it, but that was it. For aviation that was flying overhead supporting Larry Snowden and his Marines was a 19-cylinder radial engine F-4 Corsair with a max speed of 415 knots, with a max range of about 500 miles.

Take a look, fast-forward the clock, fun it forward just a little bit and think about what it was like in 1979 when Lieutenant General Larry Snowden retired. The Marines were being fielded the M-16A2 rifle. It weighed 8 lbs and carried a 30-round magazine and had a max effective range of 800 meters. The standard field radio no longer weighed 38 pounds. It was a 'Prick 77' and weighed 14 pounds, and you could talk a hell of a long ways with the PRC-77. Marine infantry wore flak jackets. We had body armor for the first time in our lives in addition to a brand new helmet.

Retiring in 1979, he was the Chief of Staff for Headquarters Marine Corps, and he was the biggest advocate for STOVL aircraft. Think about that. They had gone from vertical lift helicopters as we entered Korea, but by the end of his career, all of a sudden now Larry Snowden was the advocate for the AV8B Harrier that we fly today. We don't fly the same version. We

fly a version that's brand new, and we're working our way to transitioning to the F-35B. So he was the advocate of that. He was also one of the forerunners of the F-18 Hornet, and he was there at the rollout ceremony, General Snowden was, for the F-18 Hornet, and he made this comment about it. "It's the young Marine on the ground with a rifle in his hand in the designated objective area who's going to reap the benefits of these new airplanes." It happened at Desert Storm. It happened today in Iraq, and in Afghanistan, and on and off aircraft carriers as well.

Well, you know, I said at the beginning it's been kind of a long week with the testimony and budget stuff and holy smokes and people talking about the Marine Corps coming down in size, and yet General Snowden -- as I was going through your record, General Snowden, I found out that you were back in Headquarters Marine Corps in 1946, and you were -- weren't a general then, but you were in charge of a group to design a logistics plan for a Marine Corps post-World War II of 5,000 Marines. You think about that. We came out of World War II with almost a half-a-million Marines. See, General Snowden was responsible for leading a group to design a supply plan for a Corps that was 5,000. Some things never change. The minute wars are over we want to just drop our military.

We're never going to do another amphibious assault, remember that? I mean that's exactly what President Truman said, and that's what the Secretary of War Johnson said, and that's what some of our more famous names will not to be mentioned here tonight said. We'll never do it, ladies and gentlemen, in 1946. In 1950 we cobbled together the Marine provisional brigade centered around the 5th Marines that had been emasculated down to about 800 Marines. They put them on ships and they sailed them from the west coast. They brought the Reserves in. They brought in Hector Cafferata. After there he went to boot camp. Never went to boot camp. He joined 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marines, Fox Company... and he earned the Medal of Honor, at the Chosin Reservoir. That's right after we did the great landing at Incheon. We came in the back door and liberated Seoul.

We'll never do another amphibious landing, but we've done it again, and we continue to do it as we draw our forces down for post-war. We're not even out of the war yet and we're drawing our forces down. But I'll quit whining because Larry Snowden had to come up with a plan to bring the Marine Corps down to 5,000, so I'm actually feeling pretty good, General Snowden. (Laughter) Between World War II and Korea, you served out of the Headquarters Marine Corps. You served in Korea at Regimental headquarters, and after Korea, he was a recruiter. He went to US European Command in Stuttgart, Germany and then finally they gave him a battalion, an infantry battalion commander. That's all you ever really want to do as an infantryman -- it's the pinnacle -- in fact you could die with your boots on and be happy because it doesn't get a lot better than that.

But interestingly enough while he was a battalion commander in 1962, he was aboard the USS *Iwo Jima* off the coast of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and his battalion was the battalion that was going to land from off of the *Iwo Jima* during the crisis with Cuba. After finishing his tour, he was deputy chief of staff of the G-4 and eventually worked his way along and he became a brigadier general. This is a great quote, and you ought to be ashamed, General Snowden. (Laughter) He liked to joke about his new rank about being a General, and he used to quote the philosopher Aristophanes from 388 BC. Here's what he said: "Ah, the generals, they're numerous but not good for much." (Laughter) Did you say that? Shame on you. All of those Marines in the back are going preach on preacher. (Laughter)

He earned his second star and he went to US Forces Japan. Now think about that. He went to US Forces Japan and was the chief of staff in Tokyo for three years. Think about how ironic that is. Here we fought so hard – he fought that epic battle along with all his brothers and they sacrificed so much, and yet you came back to Tokyo for three years, and it was there that he built a reputation as a statesman and a great leader and mediator between two nations that fought so desperately and so hard. And that relationship and those relationships that you developed there were the very thing that caused you later on to be the one -- after General Haynes started this great organization -- that was years later... You're the one that said it's time to bring the Japanese -- it's time to bring the Reunion of Honor to Iwo Jima, and it's happened ever since, and it's going to happen again this year.

So you were a stalwart pillar of not only the international diplomacy but leadership in our United States Marine Corps and retired in 1979. Then went back to Japan, come back to Japan and worked with Japan. In fact, you were our US Chamber of Congress representative of Japan as well, so you think about all the importance of those relationships and how do you get beyond what happened on Iwo Jima... Yet Larry Snowden and the likes of Hank Stackpole got well get beyond their battles and improved the relationships with the Japanese. But before I ask General Snowden to come up here, I want to share this. He said something right towards the end of his active-duty years, and I think it's pretty prophetic, and I want to share it with you. I pulled it out of some archives. We actually went into the archives to find this General Snowden.

He said "The more the Corps changes, the more it seems to stay the same...I don't think that anytime in the future we will replace the Marine Corps Corporal, with a rifle in hand, to occupy a piece of ground that's important... I think rather that our designs for the future lie in improving the support that we render to that Marine so that he has the high confidence that when we put him on the objective, he can seize it, hold it, keep it and survive. The Corps will have its problems in the future but on balance the future looks great and promises to be even brighter than our illustrious past..."...we must continue our dedication to professionalism, hard work, and our proud Marine traditions...but hard as we work, we are entitled to play hard too. Keep a light heart, and never miss an opportunity to smile...don't take yourself too seriously... and never lose your sense of humor."

Larry Snowden, you've never done it. You've never lost your sense of humor, and you -- you've always been able to keep things in balance. You've been that balance leader for our Corps. You've been that balanced leader for this organization. I'm proud to have gotten to know you years ago, and it's an honor to be up here tonight with you. Ladies and gentlemen, Lieutenant General Larry Snowden. (Applause)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LARRY SNOWDEN: Please be seated. Well, truly my cup runneth over. General Amos, our First Lady of the Corps, my fellow survivors of Iwo Jima, distinguished flag and general officers, thank you for a superb evening. I don't know when I've had so many people be so nice, (Laughter) but I love it. You really talked alot about me tonight that I don't hardly remember. (Laughter) And I thank you for being so gracious about it. I grew up in the Marine Corps at the right time, if you will. Sure, I went through three wars, but so what. That's what happens in the Corps... I want you to believe that I grew up amongst the great leaders of the Corps in the past, and when I was in that first job in Headquarters in 1946, my boss

then Colonel Shoup who would later be Commandant. And I worked with a number of people like LtCol Chapman – later commandant. I got to know Col Wallace Green – later Commandant, and I that was just an awesome, awesome Marine.

And I want to just give you a little background about the reunion of honor because I seem to get the credit, and I'll take it, thank you. (Laughter) In 1985, a group of survivors, Iwo Jima survivors, at Camp Pendleton and San Diego wanted to make a return trip for the 45th anniversary of the battle. There was a travel agent in San Diego who had the capacity to arrange commercial air. He chartered -- they could not charter a plane from Guam, so when we went through Honolulu, Lieutenant Colonel Charlie Cooper, who was a good friend, intervened and got the PAC AF commander, also at the airbase to provide C-130s to take us down to Iwo Jima they had net seats for our ladies but that was whatever hell – life gets tough. The fact is after we went down, we were standing around on Iwo Jima. We had a laugh and we drank some good beer, Japanese beer, with the Japanese. There were a few there, thanks to some Marines which had lived in Japan, and we said wouldn't it be nice to do this on the 50th anniversary, and we all laughed and giggle and said, 'who the hell is going to be here to do it?' (Laughter) I wasn't sure that I was so life is unpredictable.

But the point is they came up with the idea in 1994. Several of them called me and said, 'can we have another reunion next year?' I said well, I'll see what I can do. Well, having lived and worked in Japan, I had a lot of contacts in the Japanese government, a lot of contacts in the Japanese government. I had a lot of contacts with the Japanese bureaucracy. I had known Ambassador Walter Mondale before he was the ambassador, so with the help of Warren Wiedhahn, who was my transportation expert, we went to Tokyo. And with the help of Ambassador Mondale, we overwhelmed the bureaucrats in the foreign ministry, and the foreign ministry had a valid point...they said we are deeply concerned that you Americans will use that trip to Iwo Jima to brag about your victory. That's a legitimate concern. I pledged not only my body but my entire soul to them and said this will never happen. When we go, we will go with the sole purpose to honor those who died there from on both sides. We'll honor those Japanese who fought to the death. We'll honor our Marines who lost their lives on Iwo. We pay tribute to their families, and if you know anything about Japan, you know that family worship -ancestral worship - is a very important part of their culture.

Thanks to a lot of help along the way, we got the first group launched in 1995 for the 50th anniversary of the battle -- but the first anniversary, if you will, of the Reunion of Honor. And now it's been so successful...its gone every year since. And on the very first one in 1995, we had the widow of Lieutenant General Kuribayashi as our speaker. She spoke in old classical Japanese and most of the other Japanese they couldn't understand what she was saying, but we later got a translation of what she said, and the theme of her remarks was 'we must never let this happen again.' And we have tried very hard to keep the same idea and Marines fight for that idea right now that that kind of warfare must never happen again. Well, for every point that you made about my background in your remarks, I've got ten stories I can tell you, but I won't bore you with that. I'll just tell you one more time --

GENERAL AMOS: We got all night, General. We got all night. (Laughter)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LARRY SNOWDEN: I do but these folks don't. But I thank you for the opportunity. Well, just one more time, I'm so grateful that I can be here with my fellow



survivors. This was billed as testimonial dinner for me but you know, this is about them. It's them... I was just lucky to be a young 23-year-old captain comp any commander who had a front row seat to watch them earn the reputation as the greatest generation... and they did. You gave a quote there about something I said, and I really do think I said it. (Laughter) I was often asked, what was the most formidable weapon on Iwo Jima? A flame thrower? I said no. Was it those flame thrower tanks? No. The rocket barrage we can do? No. Well, what was? My answer was simply straight forward... My most important weapon at Iwo Jima was the spirit, determination, the patriotism, and the sheer guts of all those young 18, 19, 20-year-old Marines... who every, day at the end of the day we counted our losses and cried a little. We then said tomorrow the order is 'move forward' – they never hesitated, they moved forward knowing what the odds were and knowing how bad yesterday had been.

So I want to say, again, this dinner is not about me. It's about those other survivors here with me and all those survivors who are still around. And I'm going to tell you that we survivors are getting to be smaller in number and I'm a World War II generation. I'm going to be 92 in a couple of months. We're passing at a rate of 1800 a day and that's a whole bunch, and most of us have to stand in line if we want to be buried in one of those national cemeteries because (Laughter) at the rate we are going we are overwhelming their facilities. Well, I suppose when my turn comes, I'll say okay, but I ain't volunteering to go early. (Laughter)

To conclude and to thank you one more time - each of you for being here. General Amos, I've never been so honored just to have you speak and to say words that you did about me. Thank you so much. And to all of you, Semper Fi. (Applause)

(END)